

Museum on Main Street, Smithsonian Institution
Stories: Yes | Student Digital Storytelling Project
The Supernatural with Storyteller Joe Perry, Oklahoma

Speaker 1: One of the stories that Dad used and this is from his personal experience that he was building a fence one time down around the spring. And he noticed a beagle looking dog coming toward him from off in the distance. And he said, the closer the dog got, he noticed that something wasn't quite right with it. And it was coming on a straight line toward him down the fence row. And he just quit what he was doing and started watching that dog and it come closer and closer and it looked up at him. And he said, well, dogs usually don't do that. Especially if they don't know you, they'll just ignore you and go along. Well, he said this thing had human hands instead of feet. And he knew then that it was a and that was a shape-shifter. He said he more or less was stunned and he just stood watching it, he watched it walk off and it just kept going down the fence line until it just walked out of sight.

Speaker 1: [1:24] And another time, Dad was in town and this was back when they had benches in front of these old stores and a bunch of these old men that's spit wheelin, just to kill the time of day. And there was a stranger. All these men noticed that there was a stranger and he had a black dust-around and a big brimmed hat and he was just walking down the sidewalk toward all of these guys. And he walked up there, they all just was watching him and he lifted his head up a little bit and he had the face of an owl. And that really got their attention but they was too shocked to do anything and they said is it was like he had hands but it was like he was flapping his wings under that duster and stuff. And they said they stood there, didn't nobody do nothing, they was just shocked. And he walked on down around the building and when they decided to go and track and go see what was happening, he was gone. And there was several different things like that had happened. Another time Dad was, I think he was plowing a garden at that time.

Speaker 1: [3:04] And it was a little ways from the house but he noticed something out of the corner of his eyes and it was in the tree. And when he looked, he said he could see a figure and it was standing on a branch and it was just watching him. He said but he could see through it and it was kinda like it was glimmering and shining and it didn't move and he didn't move for a long time. Finally, he decided, "I might want to get out of here." So, he backed away a little bit and took off but he'd look back and it would still be in that branch shimmering and he watched it for a long time and finally, when he looked back, it was gone. So, you know that's... He didn't really know if that was a shillow or a ghost or he didn't really have no explanations for it. And the strangest things that ever happened to me I guess, one of the strangest, that was me and my best friend had went to the railroad tracks and we sat alongside the hill and we'd been putting pennies on the railroad and letting the train smash them.

Speaker 1: [4:24] And there was coyotes back in those days and so, I had a little 22 single shot. And we'd been watching the trains went and picked up our smashed pennies and was getting back towards the house. And there was a barn in between us and the house and we had just

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put up a brand new five strand barbed wire fence. And we heard what we thought was my sister talking in the barn. And there was a black dog that had followed us home. We didn't know who he was, we all like dogs so we let him stay. We heard my sister, thought it was her saying, "Man that's a good looking black dog."

Speaker 1: [5:12] And we were, "What in the world is she doing in a barn "at this time of night?" And we took a step, we decided we was gonna scare her. And we took a step we started sneaking in and we was creeping up through, then we heard a man's voice. That stopped us. Slim looked at me and I looked at Slim, "Who in our world is this?" Well, let's scare both of them. So, Slim come up with the idea, "I'll go sneak around this side of the barn, "you go to the south side and we'll meet at the doorway. "And when we get there, we'll jump out and holler at 'em." Well, Slim had a flashlight and I had a 22, so we crept around there being real quiet, we got to the door, nodded at each other.

Speaker 1: [5:58] We jumped in the barn, my sister wasn't there, no man was there but that dog was sitting there looking at us. He was grinning at us and his eyes was red just glowing red. And Slim looked at me and I looked at Slim, we crossed trails, he went to that side of the barn, I went to that side of the barn, we ran to the back, we both jumped that five strand barbed wire fence. Well, in the meantime, my sister thought we was at Slim's house, so she had locked up all the doors. And she was up and I think she was doing dishes and we hit that back screen door and it was locked, couldn't get in. And we was banging and hollering and trying to get in and well, she come to the back door to let us in but by then we was on the front door. And we started beating on that door trying to get in, well she come through the house to open up the front door we was in the back again. So, she finally got us in there. We just fell in into the back, the kitchen there. And she said, "what in the world?" When we asked her where she was, "Was you just not in the barn?" She said, "Are you crazy? "I ain't going out in that dark thing." And we said, "Well that dog was talking to somebody." She didn't believe us. And the next morning, we went out and the dog was gone.

Speaker 1: [7:25] And we was riding horses through the old road, down by the grainery and that dog all of a sudden appeared. And Slim told me, he said, "There's your dog." "He ain't my dog." well, we watched, he followed us, his eyes wasn't red no more and he's acting like a normal dog. And there was a truck coming over the hill and that dog crossed the road at the time that truck come over and it hit him. And it, I mean just mangled that dog. And he was in the ditch and I was thinking, "Thank you Lord, for you get rid of this thing." And Slim said, "You won't have to worry about your dog no more." Well, when we made our trip, come back and the dog wasn't in the ditch. And Slim said, "He must not have been as mangled as what we thought." When we got back to the house, the dog was in the barn again, completely well, pulled back together and he's sitting there looking at us, his eyes wasn't red but he was grinning at us.

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Speaker 1: [8:06] And Slim said, "Hey, something ain't right with your dog." I said, "He aint my dog." I said, "You could have him if you want him." Well, later on that week, some of my buddies wanted us to go hunting with them. And I thought we was gonna hunt rabbits or squirrels or something and they had intentions of hunting duck or deer or whatever we ran across. They brought big rifles 30 yard sixes and 30-30s and there we was with the 22. And we was just starting up the foot of what they call Willis mountain and I said, "There goes something through those bushes." And we all stopped and looked and it was that stupid dog and you know, we'd left him at the barn. He was running across there and they said, "Whose dog is it?" Slim said, "Get him." And they all opened fire and we've seen that dog get rolled, I don't know how many times they hit him. But we've seen that dog and he was deader than yesterday's leaf.

Speaker 1: [9:39] He was dead, no pulse, he wasn't even bleeding or nothing, he was gone. So, me and Slim... They said, "Oh, he's a goner." Me and Slim said, "Don't hold your breath." You know what he's thinking he gonna be back at the barn before even we are. And he never did show up after that. I don't know where he went, maybe he went home with them old boys I never did hear but that was a demonic dog. And before they put the highways through in 1968, they had it all graded up. And Dad had just told us when he was a boy there used to be panthers running around in that part of the Oklahoma. And after he spooked us up, me and Slim went to town and it was late at night about probably nine or 10 o'clock. We should have been home before dark but we got to loafing around. And came from Slim house and he's gonna stay all night. And I had a dog named Stormy, he was about probably about a 25 pound dog. He was short, real long hair, didn't know where he come from, he just showed up. And we was crossing that road and Slim said, "Here comes Stormy."

Speaker 1: [10:55] And it looked like Stormy. And it got closer and closer and we noticed, "Well, Stormy ain't near this long." That thing was about 10 foot long it was covered with hair and it come up to Slim and laid its head on his shin down here and looked up at him and it had alligator teeth and red glowing eyes. And just before that, Slim had heard something so we picked up a rock, we both picked up a rock. And it grabs Slim's leg like it had hands and it was hugging it and it was looking straight up in his face, he slammed it down and he hollered and I'm still trying to think what could be this long? And Slim hollered, screamed actually and he threw his rock and he completely missed his leg and it too. And he said, "It won't let go." So I had my rock, I threw it and I hit it right in the head and I mean it started making the awfulest noise, the awfulest sound, glutteral sounds and for a little small hit it the big teeth, it was making roaring sounds but it let go of Slim and started just tying itself in knots like a snake. And my nephew, I forgot about him but he was with us and he was just a little guy. And so, one of us hollered, "Run."

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Speaker 1: [12:31] Well, Steve took off running, we let him have about three steps, we took off and that thing was trying to uncoil itself. We didn't know what it was gonna grab next, so we took off and Slim was on one side of Steve, I was on the other. We just each grabbed an arm and we took off, he was running too but he was about like high off the ground just getting it, we ran up the hill and we topped up the hill and we could still hear growling and carrying on and stuff but we couldn't see it anymore, so we ran onto the house and locked the door and told everybody we just had an experience of some kind and Dad said, "Yeah it's a shillow." And we found out later that there was an old Indian cemetery at the bottom part of our pasture but I guess I thought got de-consecrated or something or disturbed or something but every once in a while, Dad said something like that would show up. And another thing, we had talking about the shape-shifters.

Speaker 1: [13:35] This only happened to me one time and that was enough. Mom and Dad had gone to sing in at some Baptist Church and I guess Dave was on a date or something. Anyway, I was at the house by myself and I'll never make that mistake. But I was getting a little older and I thought, Well, I can handle it. So, I was there by myself and I don't think I was a teenager yet but back in the old house, people would come up, different people and Dad wouldn't let us kids around them. And he would tell us, or they got bad spirits, or they deal in spirits or witch doctors or medicine men's what we called them. And he said, "I don't want you kids by 'em "because they take children sometimes."

Speaker 1: [14:39] And so, at night, I remember I was supposed to be in asleep, but I'd be looking at the window and we had an old bench made out of a rock and there was an oak tree on the far side of the yard and Dad would offer them, he didn't smoke but he always kept tobacco. And when they would show up, he'd give 'em a cigar or roll your own cigarettes or char or tobacco or something and that's to, I guess kinda appease their spirits. And I remember seeing the glow of their cigars and stuff sitting there in the bedroom watching them.

Speaker 1: [15:20] And they would stay, sometimes they'd talk all night but that would stay with them to keep them talking and when it got toward daylight, I'd fall asleep or something but when I'd wake up, they'd be gone and Dad would come in and he would never tell us what went on or what they talked about or anything but he told us, "You ain't getting around." Anyway, Dad and Mom was gone, but they hadn't laid the tracks to the railroad yet or put the highway through. And we'd always had a lot of dogs and Dad, I guess it's why I still have little dogs, but that was part of our culture that Dad had taught us. A little dog can see a spirit, and if they walk toward 'em, a big dog will follow and the spirit will go. Well, I had surrounded myself with dogs, little ones and big ones and I had walked down to the lower end of our pasture where the old house stood and I was just goofing around, kind of at that shale pitch.

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Speaker 1: [16:32] Well, I was walking back down this railroad bed and it hadn't had the rails laid on it or the treads laid down, just the gravel, the bed. And my dogs, they was all with me. Well, some of them was. The main ones, they didn't, I don't know why they stayed at the house. The stupid things, they should have went with me. But I walked up and and I seen this guy in a corner of our pasture and there were some woods there where the old hog pen used to be and it had all grown up and the bushes had got big and there was a guy and a little fire there. And I go, he shouldn't be here, you know. And when he raised up, I knew, because I'd seen that face from as a kid with him coming and visit with Dad at night and I could tell you his name now, but I'm not sure he's dead yet .

Speaker 1: [17:36] But he raised up and kinda looked over his shoulder and I said, "Hi?" You know, I called him his name. And he said hello and when he raised up, he had his bottom part was an animal and his top part was a man. And when he raised up, he started walking toward me. Well, I jumped the fence and the dogs I had with me, they didn't know they're supposed to protect me, they ran with me. And he come up and he jumped the fence and we went down that railroad bed and would cross a culvert and they'd just put it in, fresh carted in and I went and crossed it and I jumped the last fence and I looked back and he was still coming. And my dogs that were staying at the house, they seen him apparently and they just went by me like the calvary, I've never so glad to see anything like that my life, man they were full cry, they were full throated and ready to fight. Well, when I looked back again, I guess he had gone through that culvert 'cause that's where all the dogs went and even the little ones turned around and they went back there.

Speaker 1: [18:54] And, I went to the house and I got my gun and I was afraid to go in the house so I sat on the porch with that gun and had all them dogs around me and they didn't settle down for quite a while but it was about 12 o'clock mom and dad come rolling in and I told him what had happened and they asked me who it was and I told them and Dad said, "That's one of the ones "I told you not to be messing with." And I said, "I know Dad." I've learned my lesson. But anyway, two or three days, took my gun, all my dogs back though there and I went, looked around, see what sign I could find and the fire was still... It was burned out but it was still there and I looked under that culvert and there was a hoof print that I guess is still there today. I went and I told CJ about it. He said, let's go look but it's kinda underwater, we can't. But even after I was married, I went back looking and there was a hoof print of a calf in that culvert in that tar. I'm thinking, I got proof but I can't prove that nothing actually but that happened. My sister that had passed away and Slim...

Speaker 1: [20:09] This is before bigfoot even become a thing. Some of my buddies told me that they was going to go swimming and spend the night at a strip pit. Well, me and Slim cooked up the idea and my sister heard us talking about we was gonna go down and spook them. And man

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they had a big bonfire and they was cooking and I think probably even had a keg of beer so I don't know what all they had, but we was on one side of the bank. Well, my sister wanted in on the deal, she drove us down there. And we parked the car about a mile away from the strip pit so they wouldn't hear us coming. We got out, we're sneaking, we walked down the fence, we walked down the road, crossed the fence, crawled up one side of this and I mean that shale pit was straight up.

Speaker 2: [Lady] [20:57] Pause, for people who might live in Washington DC and have no idea what a strip pit is, explain what that is.

Speaker 1: [21:06] A strip pit is a place where they dug rocks or shale out to build a road bed and they left the holes there and the water that seeped through the ground over years would fill them up. And aquifers I guess, if it must have, it helped fill them up. Anyway, they left the shale hills on the east side and it was flat on the west and north side or west side and south side. And we crawled up on the east side, straight up this hill and the shale would go to sliding under our feet. And we'd pull our way up by roots and saplings and stuff finally made it to the top. We start finding rocks. We made little piles of rocks, my sister said, "I'm gonna stop right here and throw my rocks." And the plan was, when we all three got set up, one of us would throw the rock and that would be the signal and it sounds just like somebody big swimming out in the middle of that strip pit. And they was all having a good time that somebody brought a boombox or something, music was going and one of us threw a rock and another one threw a rock and a third one threw and it sounds just like somebody's swimming and kicking. Well, that got their attention.

Speaker 1: [22:34] They said, "what!" We heard them, "What is that? "Turn that music off." And when they did that, we quit throwing the rocks. And they listen for a while, there wasn't nothing so they went back and we start throwing rocks again. Well, they got the bright idea that they was gonna put somebody along the edge and the others go turn up the rocks and they see what was going on. Well, they did and we threw the rocks and after a while they caught on, "There's somebody on the other side, who is that?" Well about that time, Slim was the first, I was in the middle and Rain was the furthest down. She come running by me and she said, "Something just grabbed my hand." And I said, "What was it?" She said, "I don't know, but it was, I seen the outline "of it, it was big and it had long hair and it stunk." She said, "It grabbed my hand and wouldn't let go." And she said, "I got away." She grabbed me so, I took off running.

Speaker 1: [23:34] She explained as we was running. And we ran by Slim and he said, he's gathering rocks again. He said, "What's that?" I said, "come on, let's go." And I grabbed him by the arm, well, me and him had ran together long enough, when one of us said split, the

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afterburners come on, the jets, we was gone. Well, we just dove off that steep cliff that we'd spent so much time trying to get up and that barbed wire fence was right below it. We knew we was gonna go slide right through it if we didn't jump, so all three of us bailed over the top, pants, legs got tore up, hands got tore up and we could hear whatever it was crashing through the brush right behind us. And we hit the road and we took off running.

Speaker 1: [24:21] And we heard something, the barbed wire just screech, like it was it something big had hit it, like a bull had hit it. And we took off and like I said, we parked about a mile from the car and we just ran our hearts out and once we got there, of course, we dropped the keys. We was all trying to get in and Rain pulled the keys out with me still grabbing, slapped them out of her hands, grab them, try to get in and Slim, happened to look down the road. He said, I can't use the words he said but he said, "Here it comes." And we looked, we all looked up and right in the middle of the road, we could see a black silhouette that looked like a giant coming down that road. Well, we finally got in the car, Rain, she pulled it into reverse, we backed out, we kept going east 'cause it was coming from the west. And so we made the block and she said,

Speaker 1: [25:19] "Well, let's go see what that was." So we made a mile, four mile block there, come back, couldn't even find nothing there. The guys, apparently they'd seen something too, because there was nobody left at the strip pits and nobody talked about that for a long time. It kinda shook us up. But, that was the first, I guess, I don't know if it's a sasquatch or what. But, the second time that, that happened, I was about 14 or 15 years old. Up on Three Sticks, the mountains up there and my brother, he had a bright idea that was gonna go spend the week up there. And so he took me and Slim, it might have been Slim drawing all these things and I don't know. But he took us up there and he had a few supplies and we had a pump tent and he left us our guns and our sleeping bags.

Speaker 1: [26:33] Not very many groceries because he said, "I'll be right back." Three days later, he showed up. We had done gone through all of our supplies and we woke up that third morning, starved to death. We knew he was gonna die on that mountain, we will starve to death. Well, Slim, he could hear better than I, I could see better than him then but he could hear better than I could. He said, "I hear a beagle dog." Well, back then, you can hunt deers with beagles. So, we thought we'll get in front of that beagle, shoot us a deer and we'll be all right. The only thing was, it was on that mountain. So, we had to fight our way up that mountain. We was starved to death, we was weak, we was starved to death. We started going toward that dog and was trying to get in front of the deer and he started running toward us. So, we got all set. We just knew we was gonna get a deer. And man, we was primed and ready, mouth was watering and we could hear it coming through the leaves but there was some bush between us and it. And we got all ready.

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Speaker 1: [28:08] Man, all of a sudden, this big old rabbit come out. Well that was good enough. We both shot, we emptied our guns at that rabbit and then hit it nowhere near. And when that beagle was still following it, Slim said, "Just get the dog." So, we was trying to hit the dog with the guns, we was gonna cook the dog. He dodged us, went on down chasing that rabbit and we thought, "Man, we don't have strength "enough to make it back down to camp "through all those creeks we just crossed." Slim said, "I hear a rooster." I know he was delirious. I said, "There aint no roosters out in these woods." He said, "Listen."

Speaker 1: [28:57] So, we staggered up a few more feet up that mountain, sure enough, we heard a rooster. And I said, "We aint got a gun." He said, "We'll steal it, we'll kill it, "we'll worry about things later, "we're gonna steal that rooster." Sounds like a good idea to me, I was starving. So, we made it plum to the top of that mountain and we looked down to the north and there was a filling station and this was The Waltons Filling Station. I mean, it was an old timer, old time gas pumps and we knew it was in operation because there was an old beat up truck, pulled in, got gas, walked in store, bought some groceries and left. So, me and Slim starting putting together, we ain't got no money. The first thought was, let's rob the place . Now we might not have much change or have much money gotten, I knew I didn't have much and I was digging around, looking through everything, trying to find what would come out. It might have been 75 cents or a dollars worth of change, pennies, nickels, dimes and quarters. Well, we staggered back off of this mountain.

Speaker 1: [30:07] And you know you look pretty rough when you come off of a mountain anyway. We had branches and leaves in our hair and on our clothes, mud, we was wet from crossing the creeks. And we walked in, staggered in there and I guess that old man, the proprietor, he must have been used to seeing people like that because he didn't even bat an eye and he asked us, "Can I help you boys?" We said, "Yeah, what can we buy with this much change?" We counted it out and he said, " Well, there's some penny candy there "and some slim jims there." I think he donated the soda to us. He must have felt sorry, anyway, we wound up with a soda too and I think one can of Vienna sausages. So, we split everything we had and drank the soda, we knew we had to stagger back up that mountain and we didn't get to steal the rooster, I don't know where he disappeared to. He knew what was coming, so he split.

Speaker 1: [31:10] But we started to back up that mountain and Wayne finally showed up that night and he brought some more groceries and a big pot of beans and me and Slim was just wanting to duck our heads in that pot and just slurp it up. But Wayne said, "Well, let's go scout around." Me and Slim had done been scouting around and we knew that mountain. All the deers went to the other mountain. But anyway, Wayne told us he said, "Here's some groceries." After we got back to camp, he said, "I'm gonna go back after two of my nephews." He said, "I'll

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be right back." He said, "I'll be back, just a couple hours, "I'll be back tonight." I didn't know my brother was such a liar.

Speaker 1: [31:58] Three days later, he showed up, about the time for him to go back to work, he come picked us up. Well that night, apparently, two hunters had come by our camp and parked below our camp but while we was going on our little adventure there and they had made camp. Well that night, Slim, he said, "what is that?" It was about eight o'clock, it was getting dark. And he said, "I hear something, who's that mumbling?" Well, that got my attention who's mumbling on our mountain? And I didn't hear it for a long time and he said, "Listen." So, we was camped on a ledge of the mountain and down below us probably about 100 yards was a creek, that's where we got our water. And slim said, "Something is coming down beside us." And he said, "It's mumbling "but I can't make it out what it is." So, we picked our guns up and walked over a little ways and we'd done had a fire started for the night a little bitty fire but we'd had plenty of firewood to last us through the night.

Speaker 1: [33:14] From the tent, we can just throw more firewood on the fire and not get out of bed. We both got to listening, and Slim was leaning into it and he said, "It's getting closer," and he said, "What is he breaking?" And about then I started hearing something grumbling and growling and mumbling and stuff and I never did hear no whistles or slaps or tree knocks or whatever. None of that stuff they say goes with bigfoot, but we got to hearing trees, sound like it's being broke. And it went right below our camp and we really, we really started hearing it and so Slim and I had the same idea. We're gonna build that fire bigger. And then we threw every piece of wood we had on that and we cut down some live pine trees, which you're not ever supposed to do but we was cutting them down, we had 100 foot fire going around our camp. But the thing is, we heard it, below our camp and as far, it come from the east and as far to the west as we could here and listen to.

Speaker 1: [34:27] We heard tree snaps and growling and moaning going on. And we stayed up all night and kept that fire going and the next morning, bright and early, those two hunters that had come down that night and made camp, they come up and pulled in our camp and they said, "Did you boys see that?" And we said, "No, what was it?" And they said, "It come right by our camp." And they said, "It was huge and it was growling "and kinda roaring at us "and we stayed up all night guarding ourselves," And I said, "We did too." And they said, "I don't know what it is, "but we're getting out of here." And before we could say wait for us, they was gone. Here we are in the middle of the woods. And it's a wonder that Wayne brought us more ammunition. And three days later he showed up, we was packed up ready to go and he said, "Well, these boys wanna hunt a little bit, "we should let them." "No, we're through."

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Speaker 1: [35:21] The very next week, I wish that I'd have saved that paper but the Tali hina paper come out and it said there was a huge hairy being cited on Three Sticks. And so we went down that next morning after the sun got out and after them old boys left, they said, "Y'all should see the damage that thing done here." They was tell us about the trees pinched and it went right by their camp. And he said, "Go down and look at them trees that it did." We thought, well, maybe it was them doing it, you know. So, we went down there and those saplings, they was about that big around and they was like eight foot in the air. And they was just as straight just a straight as you, if you put a plumb line on it. And as far as you wanted to look, there were saplings and they was all pointed the same way.

Speaker 1: [36:14] I don't know what all that meant, never seen it, heard of it, never even heard of nothing like that before. But that was my second dealing and I hope it was my last 'cause I can't now, I just have to stand there and fight and that ain't gonna turn out good . But that was my second dealings with something like that. And I try to tell people, you hang around long enough you're gonna have an adventure .